

David Williams II, Esquire, the Trailblazer Whose Legacy is Transcendent...

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It is not often that we meet somebody who has sustained energy, only matched by the person's powerful intellect, presence, and love of family. I found this unique combination at The Ohio State University, when I first met David Williams II in his role of Vice Provost for Minority Affairs in 1992. No one on staff knew of his insatiable drive and zest for excellence and without excuses. Strangely, it seemed beyond its borders. We discovered, in short order, that he wanted students to be their very best and afforded the necessary resources to assist them in "connecting all of the dots" at every juncture of their academic journeys.

I remember Dave as having this "larger than life" personality, with wit, fairness, and firmness. He was truly a servant leader, with a bigger-than-life and unforgettable presence resonating throughout campus and beyond. When you first met him, you instantly knew he was "no nonsense" and valued, and perhaps, commanded that "extra mile" performance.

In his post as Vice Provost, I had the unique opportunity to work closely with him and observe his remarkable negotiating prowess. On all occasions at the microphone, he spoke with clarity about his vision and that of the University. His agenda was precise and never mistaken about the timely trajectory, both short-term and long-range. I knew he could not serve for an extended time, as it seemed his "calling" spoke of one whose destiny would more broadly be captured in a most robust sphere, whether at this University or elsewhere. And so it was, after his sojourn with Minority Affairs for one year, he was appointed Vice President for Student Affairs, while maintaining his professorial appointment in the Moritz College of Law.

As this quiet giant went about the business of making indelible contributions to his profession, he could have penned many a manuscript about what was an example of the truest humanitarian. Wife Gail was his world, along with his magnificent children: Erika, David III, Samantha, and Nicholas. This devotion is mirrored in his rigorous work ethic, his capacity to multitask proficiently, and his ability to encourage the best in all who crossed his path.

All who had the privilege of knowing Dave, the professor, colleague, friend, advocate, Vice Provost, and Vice President, have cemented the reality that he, without question, made The Ohio State University and beyond a better place! Surely a "well done" sign hangs on his memory. It is fitting to close with Dave's

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own mantra, which Gail shared at the recent NCAA awards ceremony in his honor: “I cannot always do what I want to do, but I certainly can do what I can do, and I will.”

So, fair thee well to this “Trailblazer” who ran the race with dignity and all deliberate speed! It is urgent that we “go thou and do likewise.”